



MEMORANDUM

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

December 5, 2012

TO: Heath Chapter Advisory Committee
FROM: Ned Noel, Associate Planner
SUBJECT: Health Chapter Identified Issues



Last Meeting Recap

The second Comprehensive Plan Health Chapter meeting was held on October 18th with over 30 people attending. Staff reviewed the purpose of the project and the direct/indirect connections between urban planning and health. Staff noted how health status is largely determined by social and environmental factors. Thus, the way a city is designed has an important bearing on people's health outcomes.

The homework results of the Neighborhood Screening Worksheet were shared and supporting information was presented from Eau Claire Achieve and the Eau Claire County Community Health Needs Survey. (Over 625 people have taken this survey so far.)

The advisory committee and public participants then formed sub-groups to outline the issues they thought were important. These issues are listed in the first attachment called Issues Summary with the number of dots (votes) each issue received during the "dotmocracy" exercise. The identified issues generally fall into six topic areas: Physical Activity/Active Living, Food/Nutrition, Housing/Land Use/Transportation, Crime/Safety, Drug Use, and Environmental Exposures. After the meeting, Staff researched each issue to see if it was adequately addressed in existing city planning documents. Our comments are noted in the right-hand side of the Issues Summary.

Plan Commission's Direction

Staff presented the Issue Summary and other supporting information to the City's Plan Commission on November 19th. Commissioners discussed the need to focus the chapter's effort more on evidence-based policy, as well as community consensus, rather than individual agendas. Further, they directed that the overall approach should be balanced with a "menu of strategies"- not just regulation. Topics thought important by the Commission included emergency preparedness, air quality, landlord licensing, and land use density.

Trending Issues

What issues are becoming priorities? As noted in the attachment list, other sources have been reviewed in conjunction with the advisory committee's Issues Summary. After considering all the input gained so far, the following list of issues appear worthy of policy investigation during your next meeting:

- Urban food planning has emerged as a major issue for stakeholders. The topics of nutrition and healthy food access, farm-to-school/work programs, number of fast food restaurants in town, increasing community gardens, and sustainable food business development were identified.
- Using Health Impact Assessments (HIA), and when it makes sense to require them. A HIA is a tool to screen future projects, plans, policies for their potential health impact on a community.
- Safety and crime prevention policy for the design of the built environment (includes reducing traffic violations like speeding and provisions for people with disabilities).
- Possible noise and air quality ordinances (e.g. sand mining).
- Emergency preparedness/adaptation measures related to warming trends (i.e. climate change).
- Research/expand policies/programs on how to increase the quality/enforcement of rentals.
- Enhance zoning to include a mix of life-stage housing (young adult, middle-aged, seniors).
- Healthy workplaces/schools (indoor air quality, hazardous exposures, day-lighting/views of nature, security, ADA-compliance, gardens, connectivity to sidewalks/trails, bike-racks, no-smoking campuses, wellness initiatives for injury and health prevention, etc.)
- Look into health/green building codes which may exceed existing construction codes.
- Improve lighting to increase security/usage of trails and parks, especially during winter months.
- Research relationships related to the density of alcohol-selling establishments and associated health impacts/crimes. Consider regulation or programs if strong correlations exist.
- Consider tobacco regulations to eliminate second-hand smoke in parks and in apartments.
- Improve bus transfer center and provide better transit access city-wide.
- Create commuter programs/incentives to reduce vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT) within the city.

The advisory committee and public participants brought up a number of other issues at the last meeting which either received little vote, or after staff evaluation we determined the issue had been addressed. Again, this is noted in the Issue Summary attachment under the “Staff Comments” column. The next list shows which issue staff thinks is adequately addressed in existing planning documents. This does not rule out however that there couldn’t be some further policy development on the issue if the committee wanted to expand it.

- Increasing bicycle and pedestrian travel
- Increasing Safe Routes to School
- Increasing park development
- Increasing mixed-use development/density
- Increasing green buildings and clean energy
- Improving water quality

Next Meeting Preparation

Please review the supporting research in the attachments and the policy approach options noted in the UW-Madison’s graduate student’s “Health Chapter Policy Research for the City of Eau Claire” to begin to think about resolving the various issues. Policy ideas might include ordinances/regulations, programs, infrastructure investments, further studies, incentives, education, campaigns, marketing, partnerships, etc. You can also use the Internet to search for what other communities are doing by using a couple of key words.

At the December 18th meeting, the advisory committee will discuss in small groups how to resolve each prioritized issue by using various policy approaches. These strategy options will then help form the content of the chapter. The draft chapter will be reviewed by the Plan Commission before the Advisory Committee’s last meeting on January 31st.

Attached is the following information:

1. Health Chapter Issue Summary, October 18, 2012 Meeting
2. County Health Needs Assessment Survey Results
3. Eau Claire Achieve's Community Health Assessment and Group Evaluation Results
4. 2011 Parks & Recreation's Community Survey Report (Exec. Summary)
5. Planning and Health Department Staff Input
6. Health Chapter Policy Research for the City of Eau Claire by UW-Madison Graduate student
(see City website "Meeting 3" to download copy: <http://www.ci.eau-claire.wi.us/index.aspx?page=565>)